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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANTANANARIVO 000870

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/E MARIA BEYZEROV  
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ADDIS FOR USAU

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SUBJECT: MADAGASCAR: HOLDING AN ICG IN JANUARY -- BEFORE  
SPARKS FLY

REF: 09 ANTANANARIVO 868

Classified By: AMBASSADOR MARQUARDT FOR REASONS 1.4 B AND D.

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: On December 18, Ambassador Marquardt hosted the COMs of France, Germany, Mauritius, South Africa, the European Union, and the United Nations to discuss Rajoelina's recent public address, plans for a future meeting of the International Contact Group (ICG) on Madagascar, and the apparent death of the Maputo process (reftel). The COMs were in agreement that the holiday season is likely to remain calm, but that political confrontation will resume in earnest in January. Before it does, the next ICG must be held outside of Madagascar, without Malagasy participation, in early January. As backdrop to the meeting, GOM contacts confirmed this morning that the Maputo III delegates currently stranded in South Africa are expected to return to Madagascar today at 1330. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) France is the only country or entity so far to release any public statement on Rajoelina's December 16 speech, in which he unilaterally declared an end to the Maputo "cohabitation" plan, and unilaterally announced elections for March 20, 2010. The December 17 Quai statement asserts that "...elections in March 2010 will not contribute to a durable solution unless there are sufficient guarantees of transparency, control by an independent electoral commission, and supervision by international election observers", before inviting the Malagasy parties to restart dialogue and seek consensus. French Ambassador Chataigner indicated that personally "he wished Paris hadn't released it" -- a sentiment fully shared among COMs before Chataigner's late arrival at the meeting. Chataigner added his view that elections could not be successful unless a transition government had been set up first, a consensual election commission formed, and the participation of opposition parties ensured. The entire group fully expects the opposition to reject the call for elections once their leadership has returned from being marooned (and muzzled) in South Africa.

13. (C) The other COMs were all more categorical in their opposition to elections on March 20. UN Acting Representative Metcalf underlined the fact that the UN would not be providing election support without a four-month lead time; this also gives them a convenient way to bow out without having to pronounce on the political difficulties posed by Rajoelina's unilateral plans, he said. Making clear that the USG would not touch unilateral elections, Ambassador Marquardt cautioned the UN against falling into a trap whereby TGV might come back with a longer electoral timetable

and request UN support; better simply to say the UN won't support any unilateral elections, period. Mauritian Ambassador Lemaire was most vocal about the impossibility of "free and fair" elections in the current environment, raising concerns in particular about the lack of any neutral judicial structure for complaints about irregularities. Germany, the US, the EU, and South Africa were all in agreement that the election plan was unrealistic, and unlikely to succeed as long as it remains a unilateral initiative from Rajoelina.

¶4. (C) Those present generally agreed that the holiday season would be quiet, following today's expected return of the Maputo III participants, stranded on the continent since early December. Although German Ambassador Moser agreed with Ambassador Marquardt that military intervention is a real possibility, he believes that the military will respect the holiday season, and would still require some additional pretext for intervention in January, such as the threat of mass protests. AGOA was discussed as a possible trigger/pretext for military intervention, although not necessarily immediately following any announcement of suspension, coming as it would in the midst of the holidays. Chataigner stated his impression that Army Chief of Staff General Andre Ndriarijaona is more concerned with maintaining unity within the armed forces than in intervening in political feuds, as long as they remain violence-free. That mirrors our own assessment, although we are more pessimistic on prospects for calm in January.

¶5. (SBU) Wrapping up, the COMs unanimously agreed that the next ICG meeting must be held outside of Madagascar, ideally the week of January 11, without Malagasy participation. This

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message must reach the AU, which is the principal convening authority for the ICG, but also SADC, the UN, and OIF. The status of the ICG remains very unclear, following TGV's call for the international community to butt out, but all agreed that there must be a continuing international role and that all COMs should continue passing that message to TGV's entourage in order to keep options open for international mediation. They also agreed that the UN-SADC-AU-OIF coordination mechanism for all future international mediation must be substantially improved, as disconnects and working at cross purposes had contributed to the current failure. Particularly as the UN and AU are both moving forward on opening offices in Antananarivo, the structure of their operation should be coordinated. The UN mentioned that Jean Ping and Ban Ki-Moon will discuss this issue within the coming week.

¶6. (U) Suggested action request for USUN, USAU, and Embassy Gaborone: Assuming AF agrees, we request that the conclusions in para 5 above be shared with Menkerios, Lamamra, and Salamao before Christmas, in order to avoid last-minute ICG planning in early January.  
MARQUARDT